



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 157

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2013

No. 173

## Hurricane Sandy Relief

### HON. CHRIS SMITH OF NEW JERSEY

*(excerpts of remarks)*

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Smith, for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey.

Mr. Speaker, the two-tiered amendment disaster relief bill that we had hoped to bring to the floor to get us to the \$60 billion that is desperately needed to assist families, businesses, and municipalities devastated by Superstorm Sandy. Our appeal--and it's a bipartisan appeal--is that there is still time to bring this vital legislation to the floor for a vote back to the Senate and then down to the President for signature.

Numerous towns in my district, Mr. Speaker, as well as well as our friends in New York and further north, are still coping with and recovering from the most destructive storm ever in our region--and perhaps the second or third most costly in all of American history.

Today, families lack housing. Businesses are in shambles, and municipalities have been decimated. In New Jersey, some 346,000 housing units were damaged or destroyed, with 22,000 units rendered absolutely uninhabitable.

An estimated 11,000 housing choice vouchers will be needed to ensure that residents at least have a roof over their heads this winter.

Approximately 100,000 new storm-related unemployment claims have been filed in New Jersey, 100,000, attributable to the storm.

Over 235,000 people in New Jersey have already registered with FEMA for individual assistance. Seventy-five percent of New Jersey's small businesses were adversely affected, 10 percent of which, or nearly 19,000 businesses, sustained damage of \$250,000 or more, far in excess of the loss to businesses from Katrina. Total business losses are estimated to be a whopping \$8.3 billion.

Furthermore, an estimated 10,000 structures statewide will need to be demolished, and 1,000 sites across New Jersey will require remediation after hazardous materials discharge. Fifty-one schools sustained serious damage, including six that will not reopen this school year. Transit, roads, and bridges have been damaged to the tune of \$2.9 billion, which includes 294 damaged railcars and 75 damaged locomotives.

One of the main roads that runs through my district, Route 35, will require an estimated \$120 million to repair. Power and gas lines are expected to cost roughly \$1 billion. Understand-

ably, given that, at the peak, power outages left 2.4 million people in the dark. Waste and water and sewer will require about \$3 billion to repair and to protect. Hospitals, assisted living, and other health facilities will have seen over \$150 million worth of storm damage. These facts--and there are many more--underscore the devastation unleashed by Sandy, and it is without precedent.

I would say to my colleagues that no recovery is ever accomplished in a single year, but it's about predictability and the certainty of funds to rebuild and to restore that ensures that the work proceeds immediately, comprehensively, efficaciously, and without interruption.

Mr. Speaker, for days and weeks, like many of my colleagues, after that horrible storm hit, I met with hundreds, even thousands of tenacious women and men who, despite crippling losses, were determined to rebuild.

I'll never forget one resident in Belmar who came up to me the day after Superstorm Sandy, and said, 'I've lost everything, but at least I'm alive.'

We need to now backstop these individuals. We need to ensure that the monies are there, that they flow quickly but prudently to ensure that they can rebuild, and their homes and businesses and community.

You know, Congress assisted those pummeled by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 with \$62 billion in a mere 2 weeks. We are now past 2 months. And we need to be clear: The President didn't send to

Sandy Relief package to Congress til December 7.

There was a loss of several weeks, but we do have a proposal. It's about 25 percent less than what the affected States have said they needed.

New Jersey, New York and the other estimates about \$80 billion. It's down at approximately \$60 billion, so it is less.

And I've seen and gone through the numbers that my State has sent to Congress as well as to the President. They are very well vetted. Governor Chris Christie used to be a U.S. attorney. Many of the people around him are former prosecutors. Their tough and disciplined. They hate waste, fraud, and abuse, and they're trying to ensure that the money is there in the amounts needed to make a difference in the lives of your constituents.

Finally, let me just say, Mr. Speaker, we need to act now. As my colleague before me said a moment ago, New Jersey especially as well as New York, are contributing States not takers. We get back far less from the Federal Government than we pay in every year. That's a good thing. We have very, very good businesses that really provide employment for our people.

But we've been devastated, and I would hope and urge the Speaker to bring the Sandy Relief bill to the floor as quickly as possible, hopefully today, tomorrow, but as quickly as possible, because the people who have suffered, the victims, deserve no less.